

Chapter 3 Purpose and Need

3.1 Background

3.1.1 Existing Transportation Facilities

Highway 50 is an east-west divided freeway, which provides regional access between Sacramento and Placerville, and to recreational areas within the southern Lake Tahoe area. In the vicinity of the proposed interchange, Highway 50 has two 12 foot (3.6 meter (m)) travel lanes in each direction, 10 foot (3.0 m) paved outside shoulders, 5 foot (1.5 m) paved inside shoulders, and a 70 foot (21.3 m) wide unpaved median. All lanes and shoulders consist of asphalt concrete (AC) pavement.

Shingle Springs Drive is a 2-lane rural roadway, which runs in a north-south direction immediately west of the proposed interchange. The roadway begins within the gated residential community immediately north of Highway 50 and Rock Barn Road, and continues south of Highway 50 approximately 1 mile (1.5 kilometers (km)) to Buckeye Road, where the roadway terminates. The County of El Dorado maintains Shingle Springs Drive up to the private gate immediately north of Highway 50 and Rock Barn Road.

Greenstone Road is a 2-lane rural roadway, which runs in a north-south direction immediately east of the proposed interchange. The roadway begins approximately 1 mile (1.5 km) north of Highway 50 at Green Valley Road, and continues south of Highway 50 for approximately 2 miles (3 km) to Mother Lode Drive. There are no sidewalks and minimal or non-existent shoulders along the roadway, and the roadway width is approximately 24 feet (7.2 m). The County of El Dorado maintains Greenstone Road.

Grassy Run Road, Rolling Rock Road, and Reservation Road comprise the route that is currently used to access the Rancheria. To access the Rancheria today, traffic turns left (towards the west) from Greenstone Road to Grassy Run Road. Approximately 1000 feet (300 m) west of Greenstone Road, Grassy Run Road transitions from a County road to a private residential roadway. Rancheria bound traffic continues along the private roads of Rolling Rock Road and Reservation Road. All three of these roads are narrow 2-lane roadways with no sidewalks or shoulder, with restricted horizontal and vertical curvature.

Artesia Road is a private roadway, approximately 20 feet (6 m) wide, connecting Shingle Springs Drive with properties in Buckeye Rancheria Subdivision, south and west of the Shingle Springs Rancheria.

3.1.2 Shingle Springs Rancheria-Historic Access Issues

In December 1915, the BIA acquired 80 acres of land from private owners in El Dorado County. In March 1920, the BIA also acquired an adjacent 160-acre parcel to the north. Each deed to the BIA contained language stating “the land is held in trust for the Sacramento Verona Band of Homeless Indians.” Historic maps and records indicate that an unimproved road off Greenstone Road, south of the current Highway 50 alignment, provided access to the 240-acre property. That road nearly followed the current alignment of Studebaker Road/ Hope Lane.

Highway 50 in the project area was originally constructed along the alignment of what is currently called Mother Lode Drive; a two lane conventional highway located approximately 2 km south of the current alignment. The State began planning for the construction of a new freeway, connecting Sacramento and Lake Tahoe in the late 1950’s. In the early 1960’s, the State began surveying for the currently Highway 50 alignment and subsequently began negotiations with property owners for acquisition of the necessary ROW. Contact was made with the BIA regarding ROW needs across BIA lands.

The original ROW proposal was to acquire a strip of land through the southerly portion of the 240-acre property and provide access to the northerly 176-acre portion via an underpass/frontage road that would connect to Greenstone Road, a County maintained road. In March 1966, title to the southerly 80-acre parcel was conveyed from the BIA to Clarence Padilla, the local resident at the time.

When the BIA transferred title of the property to Padilla, no right of access was retained across that 80-acre parcel to serve the remaining 160-acre parcel to the north. This action resulted in the need to only acquire ROW from the Padilla property. Access to the remaining 160-acre parcel, unoccupied at the time, was assumed to occur in the future from an interior road system to be developed on an adjoining parcel.

Subsequent negotiations with Padilla and the BIA focused on the acquisition of a freeway ROW parcel and northerly remnant of 16-acres that would be severed by the freeway. Based on an economic evaluation between constructing the underpass/frontage roads and the full acquisition of the remnant 16-acre parcel, it was determined that acquisition was the most cost effective approach. On July 22, 1966, a ROW contract was completed with Padilla to acquire the freeway ROW and the remnant 16-acre parcel. The Grant Deed to the State was subsequently recorded in El Dorado County on November 4, 1966. Construction of the Highway 50 freeway improvements was completed in 1969.

In 1974, an adjacent residential development to the east of the existing 160-acre Rancheria, known as “Grassy Run”, was established. A local private road system was established to access the parcels in the new subdivision. Public access to the subdivision was provided via Grassy Run Court off Greenstone Road, both County maintained roads. Permissive access across the private roads within the subdivision (ultimately determined to be for residential purposes only) was subsequently granted to the Rancheria in 1982.

At present, the Shingle Springs Rancheria is effectively landlocked for economic purposes. Since there is no road access available for any on-reservation economic activity, the Tribe needs road access to permit its members to engage in economic activities and support themselves on their reservation. Any commercial or delivery traffic is limited/restricted by the adjacent subdivision’s Homeowners Association. The current access route is a narrow two-lane paved road that varies from 23 to 26 feet (7 to 8 m) in width through a residential development (**Figure 3-1**). The route is approximately 2 miles (3 km) long and very circuitous. Numerous speed bumps exist along the route to discourage speeding and external traffic. These conditions also constrain emergency vehicle response times during critical fire/safety events.

The Tribe still desires a viable revenue base to fund governmental programs and decrease their dependence on Federal and State funding, as well as wanting the opportunity to more fully utilize the Rancheria site for specific Tribal interests. At this time, the Tribe is proposing to construct a new hotel and gaming facility, under the terms of the requirements of Federal Law, the Tribal-State Compact between the State and the Tribe, and the Tribe’s gaming and health and safety regulations. Construction of the hotel and gaming facility will provide a revenue base for the Tribe and its members. The revenue base, along with the interchange access to Highway 50, will allow better utilization of the Rancheria site. Without direct interchange access to Highway 50, no commercial facilities can be constructed on the Rancheria.

3.2 Purpose And Need

The purpose for the proposed interchange is to provide access from Highway 50 to the existing Rancheria, which has very limited access (i.e., without unrestricted public road access). The need for this project is precipitated by the fact that the Tribe cannot develop any economic enterprise on its current Rancheria without having an improved access route:

- The existing limited-access route to the Rancheria travels through a surrounding residential development;

- The access route to the Rancheria can only be used for commercial deliveries between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. during weekdays, with fines for violating these time restrictions. This restriction also prohibits the Tribe from using the land on the Rancheria for commercial purposes.

The benefits of the Proposed Project are that improved commercial development on the Rancheria will provide the Tribe with a viable revenue base. Commercial revenues will be used to fund governmental programs and decrease the Tribe's dependence on Federal and State funding. Besides governmental functions, the Tribe plans to use revenues to support social and educational programs for elderly, poor and young Tribal members. Revenues will also allow the Tribe to upgrade equipment, hire additional staff, and expand environmental, health and safety programs. The commercial development will provide employment opportunities for tribal members and many local non-tribal residents.

See Figure 3-1